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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, strong to save, we love You because You are our shield and deliverer. You have been our God from the moment of our birth, loving and sustaining us with Your mercies.

Lord, You loved us before we loved You, and You empowered us to live productive lives. Cast out of our Senators any fear and anxiety, as their love for You increases. Teach them to treat others as they would want to be treated themselves, fulfilling Your admonition to practice the Golden Rule. May they seek You early, realizing that not an hour goes by when we do not need You. Supply all their needs from the bounty of Your riches in glory.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

TRAIN DERAILMENT IN WASHINGTON STATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, to begin with, all of our thoughts this afternoon are with the victims of this morning's tragic train derailment in Washington State and with their families as well. Our gratitude is with the first responders who answered the call and rushed to the scene.

TAX CUTS AND JOBS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a different matter entirely, the Senate has a number of important tasks to complete this week for the American people. On Friday we took another significant step toward delivering major tax relief for middle-class families and small businesses when the House and Senate conference committee released the final text of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. We are closer than ever to seizing this once-in-a-generation opportunity to update our Tax Code, to make America stronger, and to help middle-class families keep more of their hard-earned money.

The last decade has not been easy for middle-class Americans. Families, like many I represent in Kentucky, were hit hard by the great recession. Many continue to feel its effects. But too often, instead of helping people get back on their feet, Washington has been an obstacle. Our broken and outdated Tax Code lets the government take too much money out of Americans' paychecks. The Obama administration's runaway regulations slowed job growth and destroyed opportunities just when people needed them most.

Help is on the way. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is a major step toward a stronger, more prosperous America with higher wages, higher take-home pay, more jobs, and better opportunities for middle-class Americans. First and foremost, the bill provides immediate relief by letting Americans keep more of their paychecks. A typical

family of four earning the median family income will get a tax cut of more than \$2,000. We are taking that money out of Washington's pocket and putting it right back into theirs. By modernizing the way we tax businesses, we will make America a better place to invest, start small businesses, and create middle-class jobs.

Our tax bill will make it less attractive for American businesses to send jobs and investments overseas and more attractive to expand and invest here at home. That is why American manufacturers say they are excited about this bill and plan to hire new workers, while Chinese officials say it has them worried.

The conference report will also repeal the punitive individual mandate tax at the heart of ObamaCare. Under ObamaCare, Americans must either buy the kind of health insurance that Washington thinks they should buy or pay a heavy tax penalty. By repealing this unfair penalty, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will give low- and middle-class families even more tax relief, along with the flexibility to make their own healthcare decisions. The bill will also strengthen America's future by enhancing our energy independence.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act provides for further responsible development of Alaska's oil and gas potential. Unleashing more of our own natural resources will create good jobs and improve America's energy security. The historic accomplishments in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will bring immediate relief to struggling families and set America on a trajectory toward greater strength and prosperity.

I commend the conferees—especially Chairman HATCH, Chairman MURKOWSKI, and Chairman ENZI—for their work to help finalize the conference report. I look forward to voting for its passage, and I urge all of our colleagues to join me in voting to give the American families the relief they need and richly deserve.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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